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## XII.—CHATEAUBRIAND'S AMERICA.<sup>1</sup>

### ARRIVAL IN AMERICA AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

One or two generations ago, when every novel was in two volumes and serious works filled a shelf or so, our fathers or grandfathers may have read Chateaubriand. To-day the Americans who read French works usually confine themselves to writers earlier or later than he. Yet Chateaubriand was the first European author to make America the scene, and the Indian the subject of his romances. Moreover, he claims to have seen a large part of the territory east of the Mississippi; he asserts that he lived in the huts of the savages; and he describes the aborigines, flora, and fauna of the country from Niagara to Natchez.

His description of America was not received without question in France, and he replied in 1805<sup>2</sup> to his critics by saying that *Atala* might be a poor production, but that all travelers who had visited Louisiana and the Floridas agreed that in it American nature was painted with scrupulous fidelity. “If the pictures had lacked truth,” he asks, “would they have succeeded among a people who could say at each step: ‘These are not our rivers, our mountains, our forests?’ *Atala* has returned to the wilderness and her fatherland has recognized her as a veritable child of solitude.” In *Les Natchez*<sup>3</sup> he says that he has been a faithful historian of the country and customs of the Natchez.

<sup>1</sup>The following works of Chateaubriand have been examined in connection with this article: *Atala*, *René*, *Les Natchez* (*Oeuvres complètes de Chateaubriand*, Paris, 1859–1862, Furne, Jouvet et Cie, vol. v: *Romans et Poésies diverses*); *Voyage en Amérique* (*Oeuvres*, vol. ix: *Voyages et Mélanges littéraires*); *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe* (Paris, 6 vols., LeGrand, Troussel et Pomey).

<sup>2</sup>Preface to first edition of *Atala*.

<sup>3</sup>P. 534.

In the course of time an American did call in question Chateaubriand's pictures of the New World. In 1827 a writer in the *American Quarterly Review*<sup>1</sup> declined to receive *Atala* as a veritable child of American solitude or to believe that Monsieur de Chateaubriand ever saw Florida or Louisiana; but this single anonymous article seems to have been the only protest from the United States; and as America tacitly accepted the portrait, the cavilings of the French critics were silenced.

Recently the subject has been revived in France. Mr. Joseph Bédier has made a careful study<sup>2</sup> of Chateaubriand's travels, and reaches the conclusion that in the time spent in the United States, five months, and under the conditions of travel then existing, the journey Chateaubriand declares he took would have been impossible. Mr. Bédier also points out in various earlier works<sup>3</sup> incidents and descriptions that tally strangely with many which Chateaubriand offers as his own.

On the other hand, Mr. Madison Stathers, who has lived in the valley of the Ohio and should be competent to deal with the parts of Chateaubriand's studies treating of that region, also goes over the ground in his thesis for the doctorate,<sup>4</sup> and maintains that the journey could have been completed in the time and under the conditions given. While admitting many inaccuracies in Chateaubriand's treat-

<sup>1</sup> December, 1827, p. 460.

<sup>2</sup> *Études critiques*, Paris, 1903, pp. 127-294.

<sup>3</sup> François Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et Description générale de la Nouvelle-France*, Paris, 1774; Wm. Bartram, *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida and the Cherokee Country*, Philadelphia, 1791, London, 1792, etc.; Jonathan Carver, *Travels to the Interior Parts of North America*, London, 1778; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Paris, 1758; J. E. Bonnet, *Les États-Unis d'Amérique à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, Paris, 1795.

<sup>4</sup> *Chateaubriand et l'Amérique*, Grenoble, 1905.

ment of animal life, Mr. Stathers defends his Indians and his American flora.

Finally Mr. E. Dick, in an article entitled *Quelques Sources ignorées du "Voyage en Amérique,"*<sup>1</sup> brings to light two further works<sup>2</sup> as the source of most of the authentic descriptions for which Mr. Bédier is unable to account, notably the descriptions of the Ohio valley and of the country between Albany and Niagara. He also shows that the *Voyage*, which Chateaubriand pretends to have written before 1800, must have been composed after 1824.<sup>3</sup>

Since Chateaubriand's "paintings," as he is fond of calling his descriptions of America, have been anew arousing discussion in France, some of them may prove interesting to those Americans who have forgotten the brilliant colors of his canvas or are too busy to turn aside from the rush and whirl of modern life and watch him while with the large leisure of the eighteenth century he deliberately spreads before us the green and gold, rose-color and carmine of his America.

François Auguste de Chateaubriand, Chevalier de Combourg,<sup>4</sup> was twenty-three years old when he sailed from St. Malo for America on the brig *Saint-Pierre*. He came endowed with a dreamy disposition, a florid imagination, and a plan to discover, alone and unaided, the Northwest Passage. His financial resources were limited and he had never before been out of France, but these considerations did not daunt him. He burned, he says, to throw himself into an enterprise for which he had no preparation save his

<sup>1</sup> *Revue d'Histoire littéraire*, 1906, pp. 228-245.

<sup>2</sup> J. C. Beltrami, *La Découverte des Sources du Mississippi*, New Orleans, 1824; Sir Alexander MacKenzie, *History of the Fur Trade*, London, 1801.

<sup>3</sup> The *Voyage* was published in 1827.

<sup>4</sup> He inherited the title of viscount a short time later on the death of his elder brother, who was executed during the French Revolution.

imagination and his courage. His plan was to cross the continent to the Pacific shore above the Gulf of California and to follow the coast all the way around, "reentering the United States by Hudson's Bay, Labrador, and Canada." "In case of success," he continues, "I should have had the honor of conferring French names on unknown regions, of endowing my country with a colony on the Pacific, of carrying away from a rival power the rich trade in furs, and, by putting France in possession of a shorter way to India, of preventing its being opened by that rival power."<sup>1</sup>

Emerson's advice: "Hitch your wagon to a star" would have been superfluous here. This young man had hitched his to a comet, with the precaution, as will presently appear, of not making the harness too fast.

The Saint-Pierre brought also several Sulpician priests and seminarists who came to Baltimore under the guidance of the Abbé Nagot to found St. Mary's, the first great Catholic seminary in the United States. In the archives of the seminary is a manuscript life of the Reverend A. Garnier, which mentions<sup>2</sup> that Chateaubriand was a passenger on the brig and adds that he "often joined the priests and seminarists and even asked to be permitted to take part in their pious exercises. Father Nagot granted his petition, but, as Chateaubriand read with excessive emphasis, reminded him that such a tone was not conducive to piety. From that time he did not show the same eagerness to assist in the exercises, though he continued to join the party. His conversation even had a bad effect on one of the students, who later made but a short stay at St. Mary's."

Chateaubriand speaks of the Abbé and his companions as fellow-travelers, and refers to the student, Francis Tullock,

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, vol. 1, p. 388.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 19-20. The author of this life, which was written in France, is not given. I am indebted for this extract to the Reverend A. Boyer.

who afterward left the order. He omits the Abbé's reproof, but gives us to understand that he sometimes wearied of the other passengers, and says that his retreat when he wished to avoid them was the top of the mainmast, up which he climbed lightly amid the applause of the sailors, and sat dominating the waves.<sup>1</sup>

The day they entered the Chesapeake Bay a boat was sent ashore for provisions and water. Chateaubriand landed and passed through a little wood of balsams and Virginia cedars, where he observed cardinal birds and mocking birds, to a building which appeared to be a combination of English farm-house and Creole cabin. Herds of cows were grazing around, and black, striped, and gray squirrels were playing in the clearings. Blacks were sawing wood and whites cultivating tobacco. The gate was opened by a young negress "almost naked and of surpassing beauty . . . like a young night."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Stathers points out that black squirrels are rare in that section and that the three kinds do not play together.

They bought provisions and returned to the brig, which proceeded to the "roadstead and port of Baltimore." "As we approached," he says, "the water grew narrower and was smooth and motionless. We seemed to be ascending an indolent stream bordered with avenues. Baltimore appeared as if at the head of a lake. Opposite the city rose a wooded hill, at the foot of which buildings were beginning to arise. We moored at the quay of the port and I slept on board, not going ashore till next morning, when I took my baggage and went to lodge at the inn."<sup>3</sup> Chateaubriand does not

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 357.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 370; *Voyage*, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 370; *Voyage*, p. 48. The Baltimore newspapers of 1791, beyond noting the arrival of the *Saint-Pierre*, have no record touching the presence of Chateaubriand in the city.

give the date of the landing, but the records of the seminary show it to have been the tenth of July.

Baltimore is described as a "pretty little Catholic city," where society and manners strongly resembled those of Europe.<sup>1</sup> This comprehensive statement is the result of one day's observation, for he left on the stage-coach for Philadelphia at four o'clock on the second morning after his arrival in Baltimore, traveling over a road "traced rather than made."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Stathers thinks this criticism of the highway from Baltimore to the capital too severe; but roads in America, even to-day, are often a painful surprise to visitors from the Old World.

The Chevalier found the aspect of Philadelphia cold and monotonous, and comments on the lack in Protestant America of great works of architecture, a lack which he attributes to the spirit of the Reformation. Protestantism, he says, having neither age nor imagination, has rarely elevated those domes, those aerial naves, those twin towers with which the ancient Catholic religion has crowned Europe. No monument in Philadelphia, in New York, in Boston, rises above the mass of walls and roofs. The eye is saddened by the dead level.<sup>3</sup>

Chateaubriand professed himself disappointed by the evidences of wealth and dissipation he found in the cities of the United States. He expected in a republic, he says, the severity of the earliest Roman manners. The Quakers especially incurred his displeasure on account of their commercial spirit. Their sisters and daughters found more favor in his eyes, and he admits that the Quakeresses with their gray dresses, their uniform little bonnets, and their pale faces, were beautiful. Later he relents toward the

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 375.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 375; *Voyage*, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 375; *Voyage*, p. 49.

Quakers and ascribes the harshness of his first judgment to his political disappointment.<sup>1</sup>

Washington, he says, was not in Philadelphia when he arrived, and he waited for a fortnight according to the *Voyage*,<sup>2</sup> or a week according to the *Mémoires*,<sup>3</sup> to see him and present the letter of introduction which he brought from the Marquis de la Rouërie. This nobleman had fought for the Colonies in the Revolution and was known in America, according to Chateaubriand, as Colonel Armand.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Bédier doubts the reality of the visit to President Washington, of whose absence from Philadelphia, at the period during which Chateaubriand says he was waiting at that place, there seems to be no record. The description of Washington's house and of his manner of receiving Chateaubriand seem to him hardly probable. I have been able, however, to find conclusive evidence that the letter of introduction existed and was presented, for an examination of Washington's papers, preserved in the Library of Congress, has revealed it on file, endorsed in Washington's hand: "From General Armand, Marquis de la Rouerie." While the fact that Washington received the letter does not prove that he saw Chateaubriand, it renders it at least probable. The letter is as follows:

LA ROUËRIE, 22d March, 1791.

Mr. le Chevalier de Combourg, a nobleman of the State of Brittany and a neighbour of mine, is going over to North America. The purpose of that journey, I presume, is to enrich his mind by the active contemplation of such a moving and happy country and to satisfy his soul by seeing the extraordinary man and those respectable citizens who, led by the hand of virtue through the most difficult contest, have made their chief counsellor

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 377; *Voyage*, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> P. 50.

<sup>3</sup> I, p. 377.

<sup>4</sup> He entered the American army as a colonel but was afterward made brigadier-general.

of her in establishing and enjoying their liberty—his relations, for whom I have a very high regard, desire me to recommend him to the notice of your excellency. I do it with pleasure, because that gentleman has allways appeared to me to have a good right to the commendable reputation which he does enjoy—he is a man of wit and much of his time is taken up by the cultivation of that natural gift.

Our political affairs in this part of the world are in the most deplorable situation—loyalté, good sense, firmness, seems to be banished from our unhappy, and perhaps more guilty, country—the compassion of god almighty is the only resource which remain to us; But I am sure he is just, and of course I fear his mercy will be only felt long after his severity.— May France, by her present condition, be now and in all future times a tremendous instance for all peoples on earth of the great risk and destruction which threaten nations, when without any regard to their moral and physical circumstances, instead of wisely and slowly reforming abuses and repairing breachs made to their constitution, they confide the oversetting of the whole into the hands and at the discretion, of ambition, avarice, ignorance, caprices, and of all the private interest which follow of course—may your, dear général, follow, while this world will last, the impulsion given her by your great heart, your incomparable wisdom, and by that candour which so well characterize the present generation of North America.—I have been honored in January last with your letter of the 13th of October 1789—Mr. du Moustier is not the speedyest nor the most faithfull messenger in europe—but at this time, it appears essential to theses men to counterpoise with all their hability the conveniency and inconveniency of all their steps; even that of delivering up a letter directed from a free country to a lover of that country who reside in our.—

I beg leave to offer here to lady Washington the best homage of my respect—I have the honour to be with the most profound impression of that sentiment

Sir

Your Excellency's

the most humble and obedient and faithfull servant

ARMAND.

G. Washington president of the United States of North America.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Manuscripts: Letters to Washington, vol. 76 (1790), p. 210. This is the last of a number of letters from the Marquis preserved among Washington's papers, where it was found in April, 1905. Thanks are due Mr. Worthington Ford, of the Library of Congress, for his kind help in locating it.

On going, says Chateaubriand, to present the letter, he found the simplicity of the old Romans. A young servant girl opened the door of a little house much like its neighbors, and preceded him through a narrow corridor into a parlor. There were no guards, no valets. "I was not moved; neither grandeur of soul nor that of fortune awes me. I admire the first without being crushed by it; the second inspires me rather with pity than with respect. The face of man will never trouble me."<sup>1</sup>

In a few moments General Washington entered, "tall, with a calm and cold rather than a noble air." The young man presented his letter and Washington, on seeing the signature, exclaimed: "Colonel Armand." Chateaubriand then explained the object of his journey and, on Washington's seeming astonished, said with a little vivacity: "But it is less difficult to discover the Northwest Passage than to create a people as you have done." "Well, well, young man" was Washington's comment, and these are the only words of his that Chateaubriand records. They were perhaps the only ones he found a chance to say!

Chateaubriand says he dined with Washington the next day, but his account of the occasion relates only to the key of the Bastille which Washington showed him and which aroused his indignation against the Parisian mob.

On the day following he went to New York, "a gay, populous, and commercial city," and thence made a pilgrimage to Boston "to seek there, as afterward at Sparta, the tomb of those warriors who died to obey the holy laws of their fatherland."<sup>2</sup> Beyond this allusion to Lexington he has nothing to say about Boston, and even Mr. Stathers doubts the probability of the pious pilgrimage.

After his return from Boston to New York, Chateaubriand

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 390.

was impatient to continue his journey. “It was not the Americans I came to see, but something more in accord with the habitual order of my ideas. I burned to throw myself into an enterprise for which I had no preparation but my imagination and my courage.”<sup>1</sup>

His plan had met with no encouragement in Philadelphia; and some one having given him a letter to a Mr. Swift in Albany, who traded with the Indians, he proceeded thither, he says, by packet boat up the Hudson. He maintains, however, a silence about the Palisades, which seems strange in this ardent admirer of nature.

This Mr. Swift, when Chateaubriand explained what he wished to do, objected that such a journey could not be made without assistance and without recommendations to the English, American, and Spanish posts; that, if he had the good fortune to pass safely through so many “solitudes,” he would reach glacial regions where he would perish of cold and hunger; that to fit himself for such an enterprise he must first learn the Indian languages and live among the hunters and trappers. Then, after four or five years, he might, with the assistance of the French government, proceed on his mission. Chateaubriand says that these words displeased him and that if he had followed his own inclinations he would have set off straight for the Pole, but that he yielded and asked Mr. Swift to find him a guide and two horses to take him to Niagara and Pittsburg. From the latter place he meant to descend the Ohio river and collect ideas useful for his further projects. A guide was engaged, horses were bought, and the eighteenth century knight set out on his quest.<sup>2</sup> How the trip down the Ohio river was to aid in his discovery of the Northwest Passage and the Pole, beyond the experience and power of endurance resulting from travel through a wild country, he does not explain.

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 388.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 392; *Voyage*, p. 55.

## THE WILDERNESS.

The Chevalier de Combourg, on his way from Albany to Niagara, sometimes found, he says, little villages built by the colonists or solitary houses in clearings by the road side; but the country was for the most part a wilderness. After he had passed the Mohawk and entered the virgin forest he fell into a sort of "intoxication of independence." He ran from tree to tree, to right and left, crying: "Here there are no more roads, no more cities, no more monarchy, no more republic, no more president, no more king, no more men." He gave himself up to "acts of the wild," which made his astonished guide doubt his sanity. In the midst of these exercises he came suddenly upon a shanty and the first savages he had ever beheld: a number of men and women, smeared like sorcerers, half naked, with ravens' feathers in their hair and rings through their noses. A little Frenchman, powdered and curled, in an apple-green coat and a drugget waistcoat, with cravat and cuffs of muslin, scraped a pocket violin and taught these gentle Iroquois to dance. They paid for their lessons, the dancing-master explained, in beaver skins and bear hams. He greatly praised their lightness and in speaking of them always said: "These savage gentlemen and ladies." "Was there not," exclaims Chateaubriand, "something overwhelming to a disciple of Rousseau in this introduction to savage life by a ball which a scullion of General Rochambeau gave to Iroquois Indians?"<sup>1</sup> This reference to himself as the disciple of Rousseau is a key to the character of Chateaubriand's savages and indicates the source to which he went for some of his local color.

He bought a complete outfit from the Indians—two bear

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 394.

skins, "one for a demi-toga, the other for a bed." It is interesting to contemplate this outfit to be used in New York in midsummer. He added to his new costume, he says, the red cap, jacket, belt, horn,<sup>1</sup> and shoulder belt of the *coureurs de bois*. His hair and beard were long and his appearance suggested "the savage, the hunter, and the missionary."<sup>2</sup>

He tells us of going badger hunting with these Indians and some *coureurs de bois* and of finding no badgers, but of killing lynxes and musk rats. The women went along to carry the provisions. It seems strange, as Mr. Stathers suggests, that lynxes and musk rats, which are hunted only for their fur, should be killed in summer when the fur is not good.

In the *Mémoires*<sup>3</sup> Chateaubriand says that these Indians were the first he saw; in the *Voyage*,<sup>4</sup> however, he states: "The first savage we met was a young man who walked before a horse on which was seated an Indian woman, decorated (*parée*) after the manner of her tribe." This is odd. All the Indian men of our time would have been themselves seated on the horse, with the squaw walking behind, decorated, after the manner of her tribe, with whatever there was to carry.

Chateaubriand and his guide stopped to rest on the shore of the "Lake of the Onandagas." They built a bower of boughs and used their saddles for pillows and their cloaks for covering. Wandering about examining plants and watching birds, Chateaubriand came to a little valley in which was "the wretched cabin of a savage." This savage was a woman and her lean cow was being beaten and driven out

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Stathers is in error when he comments that the hunter's horn is not used in the United States. It was and is still used for calling the pack in Maryland and Virginia.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 397.

<sup>3</sup> I, p. 394.

<sup>4</sup> P. 56.

by three white men who brought five or six fat cows to pasture in the field. After the men had gone away, Chateaubriand approached the poor Indian woman, his eyes full of tears, and gave the Indian word of greeting. The woman made no answer—possibly she did not understand Chateaubriand's "Indian." He then continued in English and learned that the field had belonged to her husband, now dead, and that the whites were accustomed to drive her cow out and graze their cattle on her land.<sup>1</sup> A family that claimed a special field and kept a cow in it, and a squaw living alone, separated from her tribe,<sup>2</sup> must have been as rare among the Onandagas as were, among the wild creatures of the Alleghanies, those tame bears and otters we shall presently see taking part in Indian feasts.

From his bower of boughs Chateaubriand went to visit the chief of the Onandagas.<sup>3</sup> In the *Voyage*<sup>4</sup> he says: "The sachem was an old Iroquois in all the rigor of the word: the tradition of ancient times and the usages of the desert survived in his person. His ears were cut, a pearl hung from his nose, his face was streaked with various colors, and on top of his head was a little tuft of hair. He wore a blue tunic, a mantle of skin, a leather belt, with tomahawk and scalping knife and moccasins. His arms were tattooed and he held a string of beads in his hand." Here the old warrior is fully equipped, but in the *Mémoires*,<sup>5</sup> he says: "The 'old gentleman,' as the English accounts never fail to call the sachem, wears only a feather or fish bone in his nostrils, and sometimes covers his head, shaved and round like a cheese, with a three-cornered hat."

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 400.

<sup>2</sup> On the communal system prevailing among the Indians, see Fisk, *The Discovery of America*, vol. I, pp. 61-78.

<sup>3</sup> Beltrami gives an account of a visit to the chief of the Onandagas; see Dick, *l. c.*, p. 240.

<sup>4</sup> P. 60.

<sup>5</sup> I, p. 403.

Eight or nine leagues from Niagara the travelers spent a night with some Indians who were on the march. The Chevalier and his companion sat at their fire and roasted ears of corn for supper. The next morning the Indians went on their way, the women carrying the babies suspended from their shoulders in furs.

At an Indian village nearer Niagara the babies were hung in nets to the branches of trees. In this village the children obeyed no one but their mothers. They never quarreled nor fought, were never noisy, mischievous, nor peevish. "They had the air of something serious like happiness, noble like independence." If one of them cried for something that his mother had not, she told him to go and take it. When he found he was not strong enough to do this, he forgot it. The girls had the same liberty as the boys, but stayed more with their mothers, who instructed them in household duties. When one of them behaved badly her mother threw a few drops of water in her face and said: "You dishonor me." This reproach was rarely made in vain.<sup>1</sup>

When the sun grew hot at midday and Chateaubriand sat at the door of the cabin with some of his hosts, one of them called to the little boys who were playing in the sun that it would "eat their heads;" they must come out of it and go to sleep. They answered: "That is true," and went on playing. Then the women came and one showed hominy in a wooden bowl; another a favorite fruit; a third unrolled a mat to lie on. They called the obdurate troop, joining to each name a word of tenderness. Instantly all the children flew to their mothers, and each one carried away her struggling son, who ate in the maternal arms what had just been given him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 415. Mention of this custom may be found in Charlevoix.

<sup>2</sup> *Voyage*, p. 65.

All this would do for an eclogue, and the scene might be laid equally well in the gardens of Fontainebleau, the forests of Arden, or the fields of Arcadia.

The traveler now reached Niagara and proceeded to look at the falls. Not content with the view from above, he wished to see the cataract from below. The Indian ladder which was formerly there was broken, he says, so, in spite of his guide's remonstrances, he climbed down a perpendicular rock about two hundred feet in height to within forty feet of the bottom. There he hung by his hands till he fell, landing on a ledge half an inch from the abyss. One arm was broken, but he managed to make signs to the guide, who ran to bring some savages, and they with great difficulty drew him up by cords of birch and carried him to their camp. He had a simple fracture, and a bandage, a string, and two laths were sufficient for his cure.<sup>1</sup>

The guide refused to go further than Niagara, and the Chevalier joined some traders who were setting out to descend the Ohio river;<sup>2</sup> or some Canadians who had a part of their family in "St. Louis of the Illinois";<sup>3</sup> or some planters whose families were established at St. Louis.<sup>4</sup> He seems uncertain with whom he went.

Just here he gives in the *Voyage*<sup>5</sup> a "detached page" of his journal which transports us into the midst of the Appalachians. To the north and west, he says, they resemble perpendicular walls several thousand feet high, from which height fall the streams which flow into the Ohio and Mississippi. On the south and east the Appalachians can hardly claim the name of mountains. Their summits slope gradually to the soil which borders the Atlantic.

After this digression showing his intimate acquaintance

<sup>1</sup> *Voyage*, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 433.

<sup>3</sup> *Voyage*, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> Unpublished material in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*; see Bédier, p. 151.

<sup>5</sup> P. 77.

with the Appalachian system, he returns to his itinerary. Setting out with his companions, he went toward Pittsburg. Some days later the company separated into three parties, Chateaubriand remaining with the one whose peregrinations seemed most conformed to the plan of his voyage. Along with this party he descended the Ohio and the Mississippi, whether by barge, by canoe, or in some other fashion he does not say. The *Voyage*<sup>1</sup> seems to indicate that he continued as far as New Orleans. Mr. Stathers thinks the accuracy of his description of the Ohio valley proves that he took this part of the journey; but Mr. Dick points out that wherever the account is correct he is following Beltrami, from whom he borrows whole passages, sometimes with only slight alterations. In the *Mémoires*<sup>2</sup> he tells us he stopped at Natchez, and asks: "What had I to do with the mouths of the Mississippi, I who wished to journey to the north?" In truth, New Orleans is not on the direct route from Philadelphia to the North Pole. However, he had begun, he says, to realize the force of Mr. Swift's arguments and his lack of preparation for "attacking the Rocky Mountains;" his resources were running low; and besides he was so charmed with his travels that he hardly thought about the Pole. A company of traders coming from the Creeks permitted him to follow them. The planters of Georgia and maritime Florida, he explains, came to the Creek tribes to buy the half wild horses and cattle which multiplied infinitely on the Savannas.

Here follows what, in the *Voyage*,<sup>3</sup> he calls "Descriptions of some Sites in the interior of the Floridas." The manuscript, he says, contains extracts from Bartram, but so mingled with his own rectifications, observations, additions, and descriptions that it is impossible to tell which is his and

<sup>1</sup> P. 88.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 436.

<sup>3</sup> P. 89.

which Bartram's.<sup>1</sup> Although the *Voyage* assigns these descriptions to Florida, the *Mémoires*<sup>2</sup> refer them to an island in a lake of the Ohio river, where he landed and found a field sprinkled with yellow rag-wort, rose-colored hollyhocks, and purple obeloria. The sight of an "Indian ruin" thrilled his heart, and he wondered what people had formerly inhabited the island. He found poppies with rose-colored blossoms and pale green stems growing on the ruin. The Indians, he says, make a soporific drink from the root of the poppy, and the stem and flowers have an agreeable odor which clings to the hand that has touched them. "This plant was created to adorn the tomb of a savage: its roots give sleep and its perfume is a lovely image of innocent life spent in solitude." Any one who has ever touched the stem of a poppy will agree that its odor clings to the hand; but this rose-colored variety with the pleasant perfume must be extinct. There are two or three species of poppy native to western North America. I have been unable to find any evidence that the hollyhock is indigenous to this country. This species, like the rose-colored poppy, may be a special variety confined to that island of Cocagne in the Ohio river.

That "most charming of trees," the pawpaw, grew on this island, as well as in the neighborhood of Natchez and in other places along the Mississippi. From Chateaubriand's description it seems to be the tropical *carica papaya*. There are in the United States several varieties of trees or shrubs called pawpaw or papaw,<sup>3</sup> but they do not in the least resemble Chateaubriand's charming tree.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bédier does not think this task so difficult.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 437.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Stathers is evidently unfamiliar with the small tree or shrub called pawpaw in Maryland and Virginia. See Stathers, *l. c.*, p. 111, note.

## THE SYLPHS AND THE RETURN.

“At a time when we least expected it,” writes Chateaubriand, “we saw a flotilla of canoes come out of a bay. They brought two families of Creeks, one family Seminole, and the other Muskhogean, and along with them were some Cherokees and half-breeds.”<sup>1</sup> He was impressed by the elegance of these savages. The women who landed near them were of mixed Cherokee and Castilian blood. Two of them resembled Creoles of Santo Domingo and the Ile de France. The traders began to inquire about the horses—is it possible that the Indians brought them in the canoes? The plain of the camp, Chateaubriand continues, was covered with bulls, cows, horses, bison, buffaloes, cranes, turkeys, and pelicans. The green background of the Savanna was mottled by the black and rose color of the birds.<sup>2</sup> It would be useless for us to speculate as to how and from whence all this teeming multitude of creatures came.

While the traders looked at the cattle and the hunters went to the chase, Chateaubriand stayed with his two “sylphs.” One was sad, the other proud. They wore short skirts, large sleeves cut in Spanish fashion, the Indian bodice and mantle. Their bare legs were bound around with strips of bark crossed like lozenges: they plaited their hair with bouquets or with filaments of rushes, decorated themselves with strings of beads and hung purple berries from their ears; but their most brilliant ornament was a paroquet which could talk and which they fastened on the shoulder like an emerald or carried on the hand as the great ladies of the tenth century carried the hawk. The women of

<sup>1</sup> The Cherokees, Creeks, and Seminoles belonged to the Muskhogean family.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 441.

Florida grind with their white teeth the “tears” of the sweet gum (liquid amber) which has the mingled fragrance of angelica, citron, and vanilla. They live in a perfumed atmosphere which emanates from themselves. One of the sylphs, he says, was the model for *Atala*, the other for *Céluata*. He could not understand their speech nor they his; but he went for water for their cup, twigs for their fire, and moss for their bed; amused himself dressing their hair, watching one while she prayed and listening to the other while she sang with a velvet voice a song with a plaintive cry at the close. This idyllic scene was rudely interrupted by a Seminole and a half-breed who carried off the daughters of solitude on their horses, and Chateaubriand was left lamenting.<sup>1</sup>

With their disappearance he lost his interest in the Floridas and turned to the north. Here again the account is not definite. In the *Voyage* he says nothing about his return; in the *Mémoires*<sup>2</sup> he says: “We repassed the Blue Ridge and approached the European clearings towards Chillicothe. I had gained no light on the principal aim of my enterprise, but I was escorted by a world of poesy;” and at another place:<sup>3</sup> “We followed very nearly the paths now forming the highway running from Natchez to Nashville by Jackson and Florence, and into Virginia by Knoxville and Salem.”

Since the way by Nashville is the only one he mentions, Mr. Bédier assumes that he returned by this route to Philadelphia, or rather to Chillicothe. Why, if he went as far east as Salem, he should have wandered back to Chillicothe, several hundred miles to the west and across the Alleghanies, does not appear, and he could not have crossed or recrossed the Blue Ridge on the way from Salem to Chillicothe, for

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, I, pp. 441–449.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 450.

<sup>3</sup> I, p. 436.

Salem lies west of the Blue Ridge, in the Valley of Virginia. It is situated on what used to be called the Wilderness Road leading from Tennessee through Knoxville and down the Valley of Virginia. Over this road, as late as the beginning of the last century, pioneers were accustomed to go to the frontier, and Indians to pass on their way to see the "Great Father;" and it would have been the natural route for a traveler returning from Tennessee, Georgia, or Alabama to Philadelphia. Salem was not in existence in 1791;<sup>1</sup> but Chateaubriand only says "by paths *now* forming the highway running . . . by Knoxville and Salem," and the *Mémoires* were written some thirty years after the time of the supposed journey.

Since, according to Mr. Dick, all of the *Voyage* except thirty pages is based on the travels of others, and since the *Mémoires* are merely an expansion of the *Voyage*, it is hardly worth while to seek to determine exactly the route and length of time of Chateaubriand's wanderings. He says that, bereft of his charmers, he repassed the Blue Ridge, approached the European clearings near Chillicothe, and sought shelter at a farmhouse. His little window, festooned with ivy and the rainbow bells of the cobæa, opened on a stream which flowed between thick borders of willows, elders, sassafras, tamarinds, and Carolina poplars.<sup>2</sup> It is unusual to find the tamarind, a tropical tree originally of the East Indies, growing wild in Ohio; and the cobæa, a native of Mexico and South America, blooming in November in a clearing near Chillicothe. It brings Ceylon's spicy breezes into the bare and frosty November of the Middle West.

Left by his hostess to watch the sweet potatoes boil for supper, as Alfred was left to watch the cakes, he picked up

<sup>1</sup> See Kercheval's *History of the Valley*, and Macauley's *History of Roanoke County*.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 445.

an English newspaper from the floor. By the light of the fire he read in large letters: "Flight of the King."<sup>1</sup> Instantly he decided to go back to France, and returned at once from the wilderness to Philadelphia, "having written on the way and in haste what has here been told." On the tenth of December<sup>2</sup> he embarked, he says, with several of his compatriots and landed in seventeen days at the Havre.<sup>3</sup>

Thus in five months, or less, if we deduct the stay in Philadelphia, he claims to have traveled from Baltimore to Niagara, thence to the Gulf of Mexico, and back to Philadelphia; down streams whose shores were infested with Indians and wild animals; through the virgin forest; over mountain after mountain; to have examined the plants, studied the animals, inquired into the manners and customs of the Indians, taken notes and written a romance in the "huts of the savages."

"When we have made allowance," writes Mr. Stathers,<sup>4</sup> "for the fact that in his novels Chateaubriand is writing fiction, we believe that the principal part of his study of the Indian is authentic. Nowhere else among the writers of the Old or New World do we find a better portrait of the Indian in so few pages." Let us now examine this portrait.

"The Indian," says Chateaubriand, "was not savage; European civilization did not act upon a pure state of nature, but upon the budding American civilization. If it had found nothing it would have created something; but it found manners (*mœurs*) and destroyed them because it was the stronger and would not mix with them."<sup>5</sup> In *Les Natchez*<sup>6</sup> René is represented as "returning to that little

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 475.

<sup>2</sup> No one has called this date into question, but we have only Chateaubriand's unsupported statement that his return-sailing was even this late.

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 476.

<sup>4</sup> *L. c.*, p. 136.

<sup>5</sup> *Voyage*, p. 199.

<sup>6</sup> P. 519.

society superior to any other which existed on the earth : ” a society composed of his Indian wife, Céluta, her brother Outougamiz, a young Indian girl, Mila, and a young French captain from Fort Rosalie.

Chateaubriand’s Indians are blood relations of Richardson’s heroines. No other beings ever possessed so much sensibility, such delicate nerves. Enough tears are shed in his romances to irrigate the desert lands of Arizona and to make the barren plains of New Mexico blossom like the rose. Young men and maidens, old men and lusty warriors all dissolve in tears. Once they flowed in such torrents that they could be heard.<sup>1</sup> His Indian maidens blush and turn pale and faint exactly as if their names were Clarissa and Pamela instead of Atala and Céluta. Adario, the stern chief of the Natchez, pressed his daughter and niece to his heart ; Céluta sang the song of welcome for René, and “ all the family wept for regret, love, and virtue ; ” Outougamiz, having adopted René as his foster brother, made a speech and “ tears fell from his eyelids ; ” when René and Outougamiz returned from the country of the Illinois, there was a “ general effusion of hearts.”<sup>2</sup>

One of the most interesting bits of description in *Les Natchez* is the characterization of the Sioux.<sup>3</sup> “ He unites,” we are told, “ all that is desirable in the savage and civilized man : his manners are as sweet as the plants by which he is nourished.” It is to be feared that since Chateaubriand’s day the Sioux has changed his diet. The best known chiefs of recent times, Crazy Horse, Spotted Tail, and Sitting Bull were not clothed in gentleness as in a garment, nor were the braves who followed them remarkable for the sweetness of their manners.

The appearance of the Indians of Chateaubriand’s romances

<sup>1</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 345.

<sup>3</sup> P. 279.

is not what we have been led to expect of the race. Atala's hair was a 'veil of gold :' the blue veins could be seen in her dazzlingly white cheeks.<sup>1</sup> It is true that Atala was only half Indian, having a Spanish father ; but Chactas, her Indian lover, was not aware of this till she told him : he found nothing in her appearance to indicate that she was not all Indian. Céluta, a pure Natchez Indian, was dazzling like ivory.<sup>2</sup> In the opening pages of *Les Natchez* she enters blushing. "The blush among young Indians," Chateaubriand explains, "is perceptible." After her journey to New Orleans her black hair shaded a brow which had grown pale and her beauty seemed divine.<sup>3</sup>

Garments of bark are frequently mentioned. Atala made a mantle of the bark of the ash for Chactas ; Céluta wore a white robe made of mulberry bark which trailed lightly behind her, her rosy heels lifting the border at each step. The air was embalmed by the odor of the magnolia in her hair.<sup>4</sup> When she went to steal the reeds and if possible save René's life, she carried cords of wild linen and a roll of cloth made of mulberry bark which she used for a veil. These Indian women were addicted to wearing veils, usually made of bark. Mila even went swimming in one.<sup>5</sup> They had also a habit of wrapping their babies in furs, which must have been uncomfortable in summer, and it is no wonder that the infant daughter of Céluta did not thrive. This unfortunate child was swathed in layer after layer of ermine skins, although it was summer and they were travelling from New Orleans to Natchez.<sup>6</sup> How the skins of the ermine, an animal which lives in a cold climate, came to the country of the Natchez, we are not informed.

The favorite beverage of the Natchez Indians seems to

<sup>1</sup> *Atala*, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 430.

<sup>3</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 394.

<sup>4</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 162.

<sup>5</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 356.

<sup>6</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 420.

have been “water of the maple” (perhaps the sap of the sugar maple), but they also partook of “cream of nuts” (possibly cocoanut milk?), fresh sumac, and water of the smilax, all decoctions unfamiliar to the present inhabitants of the United States. The fruit oftenest mentioned is the may apple, though persimmons sometimes appear, and strawberries are mentioned twice.

That a people who could get anything else should eat may apples is a mystery. Wild grapes grew rampant all over the country; blackberries, huckleberries, and raspberries are indigenous to the United States, and according to Parkman<sup>1</sup> crab apples, plums and cherries. Why do these Indians never touch them?

Chateaubriand’s Indians spun the sinews of the deer, for what purpose we are not informed. Chaetas smoked the pipe of peace, “filled with the fragrant leaves of the mountain laurel.”<sup>2</sup> The leaves of the mountain laurel have no fragrance and are poisonous. The laurel of the Mediterranean, *laurus nobilis*, has aromatic leaves. Céluta embroiders on moose skin with purple thread the wars of the Natchez and the Seminoles.<sup>3</sup>

“After I returned home,” says Chateaubriand, “I received a pamphlet printed among the Cherokees which was addressed to me in their interest as the defender of the liberty of the press;”<sup>4</sup> and in the *Voyage*<sup>5</sup> he muses: “If I returned to-day to the United States, Chaetas might be a deputy to Congress.” Here is progress, for he says the *Voyage* was written before 1800 and in the *Mémoires*<sup>6</sup> we read: “At the beginning of the war of American Independence the Indians still ate their prisoners, or rather the killed; and an English captain, in taking soup out of the kettle of an Indian, dipped up a hand.”

<sup>1</sup> *Pioneers of France in the New World*, p. 399.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 192.

<sup>4</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 458.

<sup>5</sup> P. 207.

<sup>6</sup> I, p. 421.

Not the least of the wonders Chateaubriand found in America was the amazing docility of all the Indians he encountered. He traveled, according to his account, from Albany to Niagara with a single companion, and thence with a small party to Pittsburg and down the Ohio and Mississippi as far as Natchez. He also claims to have been in Louisiana and "the Floridas" (a general name, he explains, for Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida), to have followed the Mississippi to its mouth, and to have returned to Philadelphia by Chillicothe. Yet not once did he encounter anything worse than a few black looks from a Seminole and a half-breed; the very animals seemed to grow timid at his approach. Wolves and wildcats, panthers and bears disappeared from the forests and mountains. In all his wanderings the only creature that even threatened was a rattlesnake in the underbrush near Niagara.

The free play Chateaubriand gives his imagination in regard to American animals has been mentioned. He peoples the shores of the Mississippi with reindeer and moose. Paroquets abounded, and somewhere along the course of the Ohio they learned words from the settlers and repeated them in the woods. They were so numerous and destructive that a bounty was paid for their heads. Blue herons and rose-colored flamingos and pelicans also light up, in his pages, the Mississippi landscape.<sup>1</sup> Chateaubriand tells us that at the feasts of the Indians one often sees seated, pell-mell with the savages, bull-dogs, bears, and tame otters;<sup>2</sup> in the *Voyage* there are mentioned a serpent whose breath is deadly and a two-headed snake.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Atala*, pp. 20, 21, 109; *Les Natchez*, p. 423; *Voyage*, p. 81, etc.

<sup>2</sup>*Voyage*, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>P. 107; Carver had already introduced the former. Mr. Bédier sought long and eagerly for the two-headed snake and at last discovered him in Bonnet; see Bédier, *l. c.*, p. 226.

Mr. Stathers admits that Chateaubriand's fauna is unreliable but asserts that his flora is substantially correct, except that plants and trees belonging to large stretches of the country are brought together in a small space. "His works," says Mr. Stathers, "show a profound knowledge of plants."<sup>1</sup> In the main, it is true, Chateaubriand's authorities on botany seem to have been trustworthy, but in several instances the trees or plants he refers to as found in the United States are tropical. So the tamarind,<sup>2</sup> a native of the East Indies; the pawpaw<sup>3</sup> (*carica papaya*; not the American species), a tropical tree and one of his favorites; the terebinth,<sup>4</sup> a native of Africa, Palestine, and the Greek islands; the latania,<sup>5</sup> or fan-palm, a native of the Old World; the cobæa,<sup>6</sup> a native of Mexico and South America. René and his hosts drink water of the maple from a bamboo knot.<sup>7</sup> The wax tree<sup>8</sup> may mean the wax palm of the Andes, though there are a Brazilian tree and a tree or shrub in China called wax tree.

To sum up, a careful examination of Chateaubriand's works shows that two of his statements about his visit to America may be accepted without hesitation: he came to Baltimore, and his letter of introduction from the Marquis de la Rouërie was received by Washington.

EMMA KATE ARMSTRONG.

<sup>1</sup> *L. c.*, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> *Atala*, p. 30; *Les Natchez*, p. 421; *Mémoires*, I, p. 455, etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Voyage*, p. 92; *Atala*, p. 38, etc.

<sup>4</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 430.

<sup>5</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 282.

<sup>6</sup> *Mémoires*, I, p. 455.

<sup>7</sup> *Les Natchez*, p. 162.

<sup>8</sup> *Voyage*, p. 88.